SHIPMAN/GOODWIN SUGGESTED POLICY REVISIONS

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4218.51P

PERSONNEL - CERTIFIED/NON-CERTIFIED

SOCIAL NETWORKING/SOCIAL MEDIA

The Colchester Board of Education acknowledges that its employees have the right under the First Amendment, in certain circumstances, to speak out on matters of public concern.

The Board expects all employees to learn to use and stay abreast of technological resources that will assist them in the performance of their job responsibilities.

Staff members shall utilize social network sites judiciously by not posting confidential information about students, staff, or District business. Communication via social networks with Colchester students will be appropriate and professional; communication with students in the school where staff members currently work must be related to school assignments or activities. ~~Administrators shall annually educate staff and orient new staff members concerning the importance of maintaining proper decorum in the on-line digital world as well as in person.~~

Ordinarily, the use of social media by employees, including employees' use of personal online accounts, will not be a legal or policy issue. While a policy cannot address every instance of inappropriate social media use, employees must refrain from social media use that:

1) interferes, disrupts or undermines the effective operation of the school district;

2) is used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications;

3) creates a hostile work environment;

4) breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees; or

5) violates the law, board policies and/or other school rules and regulations.

School district employees are prohibited from engaging in any conduct on social networking sites that violates the law, Board Policies and/ or the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators, which applies to all staff and currently states:

The education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professionalism. Therefore, the educator accepts both the public trust and the responsibilities to practice the profession according to the highest possible degree of ethical conduct and standards. Such responsibilities include the commitment to the students, the profession, the community, and the family.

Social media include the posting of ideas, information, photos, opinions, or thoughts on a web site with the purpose of connecting with other people. ~~Current examples are facebook, twitter, YouTube, Linked In; wikis, nings and blogs; image sharing networks such as Flickr and Picasa. [It is recognized that social software and media will continue to change.]~~

Legal References: U.S. Constitution, Amend.

Conn. Constitution, Article I, Sections 3, 4, 14

Electronic Communication Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510 through 2520

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-40x
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-48d
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-51q
Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 53a-182; 53a-183; 53a-250

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COLCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Colchester, Connecticut